

The Athenian Mercury.

Tuesday, January 22 1655.

Quest. 1.

ARE the Seasons of the year every where Changeable like ours in respect to fruits, and flowers; or is there any place in the World where they are always standing?

Ans. In *Rhede's* account of Malabar, he tells us that flowers and fruits are to be seen flourishing all the year in that happy Climate, for the flowers of one plant no sooner decay, but those of some others appear; and so in respect to fruits, by that time some are almost out of season, others are ripe. Thus what he calls the *plaso* blossoms in September and October, and bears fruit in January: so the *Kaka Mulla* buds in June and July, and its fruit is ripe in the beginning of the year. The *Moullava* (a kind of bean) blossoms in winter, and its fruit is good only in November and December; It is also one of those plants which grows without cultivating in sandy places, and is always green; as well as the *Wellia-Tagera*, whose flower blows in Summer, altho its fruit is ripe as soon as that of the *Moullava*. The tree which the *Brachmans* call'd *Singi*, and the Portuguese *Cornos dos Diabos*, often bears flowers and fruits twice a year, flowers in April, May, and June, and fruits in March, and September: The Odour and beauty of some of these flowers are ready to overcome those who manure 'em.

Quest. 2. I have often observed Ministers, and also some Lay-men that have shewn a great deal of respect to the Church, by keeping their heads bare, bowing, &c. But do not know of any example they have for it, and some believe 'tis a pure superstitious innovation of our own times, tho I have been told by several that the Jews testify'd much more reverence for the Temple; which if true, I desire you'd favour me with a few instances of it, because I believe the ignorance of its ever being used by God's people has been an occasion that many have been offended at the practice.

Ans. 'Tis undoubtedly true, that the Jews were obliged to shew a great many external marks of respect to the Temple, and the design of its being enjoin'd was to inspire the people with a veneration for the place of God's worship. They were forbidden to carry a stick to the Temple, to enter therein with their shoes, or dirty feet, or to carry any silver about them thither. Nor were they permitted to spit in any place of the holy Mountain. If any one had any occasion to spit, says *Maimonides*, he must do it in some corner of his cloaths. They were forbidden to use any gesture which declared the least irreverence, to walk too swift, or to pass by there simply to go to any other place. None were permitted to sit in the Court of Israel, but the Princes of the house of David. 'Twas likewise amongst them a mark of irreverence to pray to God uncover'd, and therefore not permitted: Tho the contrary practice has since been established in the Christian Churches by the Apostles: Every man, says St. Paul, who prayeth or prophesyeth with his head cover'd, dishonoureth his head. 1. Cor. 11. 4.

Quest. 3. I have an earnest request to you in behalf of a young Gentleman, he has a very good estate in money: Of a good bulk, a very comely face, and an excellent head of hair; this agreeable person desires you would oblige him, in helping of him to a wife equal in merit, to all these perfections.

Ans. We believe he's too well known to speed amongst his acquaintance, or else he'd ne're address himself to strangers, but who knows but there may be some like under the like circumstances, and therefore being charitable, we are willing to couple the fools, and in order to it we think nothing requisite for 'em

to do, but each to publish their names either in the Gazette, or by a common Cryer.

Quest. 4. What was the reason that the ten Tribes differ'd in their manner of worship from the other two, and became more Idolatrous? Wherein was the greatest difference in respect to their Ecclesiastical Government? and how long did they flourish under it?

Ans. The Kings of Israel out of policy to prevent the people from returning to Jerusalem, kept them at the greatest distance they could from the two Tribes, by altering their manner of worship, and introducing a great deal of Idolatry, to accomplish which, they had their Priests and inferior Ministers answering to the Levites, but they permitted no Priest or Levite of Aaron's order to live amongst them. Yet had they also their prophets, and prophets Children or Scholars: They had likewise their Elders, who had power of Ecclesiastical Censures; but both Elders and people were ruled by the Prophets. And these unhappy Tribes lost both their discipline and liberty together when they were carried away captive by the Assyrians; For those few of the Ephraimites who were left behind, when *Salmanasser* took the rest of the Israelites into Assyria, being overpower'd by the multitude of strangers sent thither to plant the Country again, were obliged to comply with these new inhabitants in their Idolatrous Religions.

Quest. 5. When were publick places of worship first built, and who was the founder of 'em?

Ans. *Lactantius* and many others believe 'twas a little after the building of Babel, and that *Ninus* was the first, who about that time set up statues in memory of Jupiter Belus, and Juno, his father and mother; which statues were set up over their Sepulchers, and divine honours offer'd them; and in process of time inclosed within stately buildings, which were called their Temples, and built within consecrated groves: Such were the Temples of *Vulcan* in *Sicily*, *Cybele* in the grove of *Ida*, *Jupiter Hammon* in the grove of *Dodona*, and of *Apollo* in the grove of *Daphne*, &c. These dark groves strook a terror in the worshippers; and because they had continual lights burning in them they were called *Luci à Lucendo*, after which they became *Ashyl*, sanctuaries or places of Refuge: Which Use, some believe, was first invented by *Hercules's* Children, to secure themselves from those their father had oppress'd.

Quest. 6. I know the Name of Ass, has for a long time been an injurious term; and I desire to know whether it was so always, and what is the true signification of it?

Ans. Sometimes very strong and laborious persons have been thus call'd, as one *Geoffry*, was surnamed *Asinus*, propter vires, non propter pigrum, as *Aimonus* tells us in the 3d lib. of the Miracles of St. Benner. Wherefore the Religious of the S. Trinity are not offended that their Order is called, *Ordo Asinorum*. *Chamor*, one of the Hebrew Names for the Ass, was that of *Skechem's* father. And also amongst the Latins we find *Asello* and *Asinus*. As for the original of this word *Chamor*, *Bochart* believed it came from one of the significations of *מח* *Chamar* used amongst the Arabians, viz. To be red, or ruddy: But some others have thought it was deriv'd from *Chamar*, to be strong, heavy, and dull: In which sense it was mostly received amongst the Chaldeans and Thalmudists, and that well agrees with the destiny of this Animal, to bear great burthens. One of the good qualities of the Ass is said to be its exquisite faculty of hearing, to which the Length of its ears contribute not a little. From whence

whence the fable of *Midas* took its birth, because nothing passed in his Kingdom, but this Prince is said to have known it.

Quest. 7. *Pray give me your thoughts, as soon as you can, what Solomon means when he says; Be not Righteous overmuch, neither be thou overmuch wicked; Also what St. Paul would have us understand, when (speaking of himself, and another Apostle) he asks this question: Have we not power to eat, and to drink, to lead about a Sister, a Wife, as well as other Apostles. Your speedy answer may afford a great deal of satisfaction to a Gentlewoman, who because she is a Christian, forgets she is a Woman, and that she may be happy hereafter, makes her self miserable here, and by denying her self the innocent enjoyments and freedoms of Life, lest she should sin, has brought her self into a considerable degree of melancholy. I am very ready to acknowledge, The number of those persons who are guilty of the other extreme does mightily exceed that of those who are guilty of this, yet since she is not the only instance, your answer may not be only of advantage to her, but probably to many more.*

Ans. The first question, be not Righteous over-much, &c. we have already answer'd in a former Mercury. As to that of St. Paul, he means no more than that it was permitted to them as well as to other persons to enjoy all the innocent advantages of life, Christianity not only allowing, but also enjoying what ever is for the good of Society: Therefore whoever deny themselves any Lawful enjoyment through a mistaken Zeal, are guilty of a work of supererogation, which will never merit any reward. It is true it may sometimes be necessary, where persons find, without that expedient, they cannot observe the just limits of their duty, to deny themselves in some things, but then it must not extend so far as to be any injury to their health, or impediment to the good they may be capable of doing in the World. And if examin'd, this mistaken principle will be found generally to proceed either from some infirmity of the body, or great weakness in the Judgment.

Quest. 8. *If one under age is compellable to pay debts contracted for Diet and Cloathing?*

Ans. Yes.

Quest. 9. *Whether what preceded our agreement of the 16 of the Last month was any ways culpable; and if not, we beg your reasons to satisfy one of the parties concern'd, whose conscientious scruples extremely dissatisfy them.*

Ans. The Negative is affirm'd by most divines, and the reasons you have urged in the behalf of your own party are very good and just; and as much as can be said upon it.

Quest. 10. *You have formerly given some account of the Religion and Customs of Armenia, and if to the rest you'll be pleas'd to add their way of Ordination, I shall take it as a great favour.*

Ans. The best account we know of is, from an ancient *Armenian Ritual* translated by *Galiny*, where we have the very words with a relation of the ceremony they make use of upon this occasion. When any one presents himself to be consecrated, the Bishop first cuts his hair in four several places, in the form of the cross, and says unto him; Give ear, and to this ceremony bring all the attention you are capable of; behave your self in such a manner as may show you believe in your heart, what you sing with your mouth; and what you have receiv'd into your belief, make appear in the conduct of your life; as well as in this shaving of your hairs, which is a testimony that all the earthly desires of the age are sever'd from you, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen. After some prayers and hymns, they give him a broom; and say unto him: Receive the power of cleansing the Church of God, who will purge you from all the sins you have committed, in the name of the Father, &c. They confer all orders with the like cere-

monies, whereof each has some allusion to the employ or function conferr'd.

Quest. 11. *At what time of his life did Solomon write the Proverbs, the Canticles, and Ecclesiastes?*

Ans. 'Twas the opinion of *Lightfoot*, and we think it very Probable, that he writ the proverbs, as soon as he had accomplish'd those buildings he had undertaken; and that he compos'd his song upon his Marriage with the King of Egypt's daughter; who being of a hot Country was brown, but that his chief end was to represent the spiritual marriage of Jesus Christ with his Church, under the sensible types of his with an Egyptian Princess. But as for *Ecclesiastes* we believe it of a Later date, and 'tis very likely he writ it near his latter end, in the time of his repentance.

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